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FM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1084  
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 0974  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 0374  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 0374  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0219  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0224  
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON 0146  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 0019  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0168  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0027  
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC  
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RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
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SUBJECT: UNITED LIBERATION FRONT OF ASOM CONDUCTS DEADLY EXPLOSIVE  
ATTACKS IN NORTHEAST INDIAN STATE OF ASSAM

1. (SBU) In the run-up to India's August 15 Independence Day celebrations, the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) conducted two deadly explosive attacks in the Northeast Indian state of Assam. On August 11, six policemen were killed when a landmine exploded under a police convey conducting counter-insurgency operations in Tinsukia district of Upper Assam. On August 12 two people, believed to be ULFA members, threw hand grenades into a busy market place in the state capital Guwahati. Luckily, just one of the grenades exploded and the others failed. Six people were injured in that attack and one person reportedly died. Post issued a Department-cleared Warden Notice on August 11 alerting AMCITS in the district of the risk of possible attacks by ULFA in Assam during the Independence Day period.

2. (SBU) In response to the violence, the Government of India (GOI) sought to reduce tensions with ULFA by announcing on August 13 suspension of military operations against the insurgent group for ten days. A senior security official in Assam told Post that the GOI wanted to "wait and watch" for ULFA's reaction to this overture, hoping that ULFA would reciprocate the government's more conciliatory approach. The official also observed that GOI security forces were less focused on ULFA-sponsored violence, given concerns about the potential for violence from Islamic groups.

3. (SBU) Post's security contact indicated that ULFA may still be a growing threat as it has re-established bases in neighboring Bhutan and that country is again becoming a base for insurgent groups from India and Nepal. In December 2003, the Indian military, with cooperation from Bhutanese government, destroyed several ULFA camps in Bhutan. On August 14, "The Asian Age" newspaper reported that ULFA has re-established three camps in Bhutan's Samdrup Jhonkar district. The new camps are reportedly commanded by Hira Sarania, protigi of ULFA "Commander in Chief" Paresh Barua. Barua, according to GOI sources, is in hiding in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Media also reported Maoist rebels from Nepal are setting up camps in Bhutan. Post's security contact said that the Bhutanese government will eventually have to fight these insurgent groups. Bhutan recently created two

units specially trained for counter-insurgency operations.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: The GOI's recent decision to halt ongoing military operations against ULFA is surprising as in the past, suppression efforts have been stepped-up to crush ULFA when it has conducted attacks. The GOI apparently hopes that suspension of operations may encourage the stalled peace negotiations with ULFA's representatives, the Peoples Consultative Group (PCG). However, indications that ULFA is again setting up bases in Bhutan presents the disturbing prospect of expanding violence from Assam into its Himalayan neighbor. In 2003, only a concerted effort by the Indian military could destroy ULFA's bases in Bhutan. The additional possible presence of Nepali Maoists would also add to the already violent mix of ethnic insurgency in the Eastern Himalayan region.

JARDINE